

# INTERPLAY

the metagamer dialogues no.1



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may...june

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## WITHIN:

We think you'll like INTERPLAY'S premier issue. We have outstanding art and many interesting articles, such as Thomas Davidson's fictionalized account of his finding of THE TREASURE OF THE SILVER DRAGON. It's not every day that somebody gets \$10,000 for winning a game.

(We'll be running another \$10,000 treasure hunt this year: UNICORN GOLD. Write for more information.)

We've focused this issue on TFT with variants, a column and an actual adventure. You'll also find designer notes on the new and popular LORDS OF THE UNDEREARTH game, as well as on THE AIR-EATERS STRIKE BACK and ROMMEL'S PANZERS.

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## editorial...

Welcome to your magazine.

Well, yes, INTERPLAY is a blatant house organ, dealing only with Metagaming products; but it is also the adventure game magazine which is open to every reader's voice.

As the name implies, INTERPLAY is a forum for gamers to interact and communicate. My function as editor will be more one of policy than copy-editing and every piece will be printed pretty much as it was submitted.

The point is that INTERPLAY is not and will not become a glossy mass-market product with an exclusive set of contributors. INTERPLAY is where you can speak your mind.

Contributors will be given nominal compensation: free issues or credit on Metagaming products. We want you to write because you have something to say, not because you need some extra cash -- yet we feel that you ought to be rewarded in some way.

And a greater reward will result from the sharing of ideas. Send us your variants, your art, your humor, your concepts and your opinions for the scrutiny of your gaming peers.

Let your voice be heard.

If you can't be a contributing editor, then send an article when you can. If you can't do that then send us a letter. At the very least send us convention data or general gaming news for us to plug.

INTERPLAY has an informal format, yet it will be presented in a readable, professional manner. This is not a fanzine.

That's enough of an introduction; take a look at INTERPLAY. Get excited and tell us what you like... or what you don't like. Most importantly, tell us what you want from INTERPLAY. We really will listen.

Trace Hallowell



## coming distractions...

Every good house organ needs to shill the new products. We'll be telling you of all the new game titles and projects. Of course, they will all be described in such wondrous detail that you won't dare resist buying them.

Before laying the propaganda on you it would seem right to explain why there is such a thing as INTERPLAY. Over a year ago Metagaming used to publish THE SPACE GAMER. It was sold for various good reasons. As it develops, there are other various good reasons why Metagaming needs a magazine. Those reasons became apparent after we didn't have one.

INTERPLAY will be different. For one, we'll avoid some of the things that previously made magazine publishing a problem. For another, we'll do more of the things that make magazine publishing profitable and fun.

INTERPLAY's function is idea exchange and communication among dedicated gamers. It will never try to appeal to the non-gamer or casual gamer. What appears in these pages will be the writings of gamers. The goal is to increase your enjoyment of games. Content will be more important than appearance.

Let us know what you think. Better yet, write down what you would like to see as an article and send it in. The only rules are do the best you can and share your fun.

New products. Boy, have we got new products.

The first batch of releases you'll be seeing include THE FANTASY MASTERS' CODEX, FANTASY MASTERS' SCREEN and A FISTFULL OF TURKEYS.

FIST is a game that Metagaming is distributing for the publisher, Some Turkey Games Co. Metagaming regretfully signed a contract with lots of small print. It obligates Metagaming to distribute STG products. Some Turkey, owner of Some Turkey Games, tells us that new titles will be coming. So, watch out (as in WATCH OUT!!) for Kamikaze Turkeys and others this summer. Please, don't complain to Metagaming about STG. If you have something to say write to Some Turkey, he loves to shred the letters and fluff his nest.

New from Metagaming is a new line, Metagames (how original can you get). These are boxed games in a 8 3/4 by 5 3/4 by 1 size. Prices will run from \$5.95 to \$9.95, depending on components. Now that Metagaming has sold over a million Micros in the under \$5 price range we'll have something in the \$5 to \$10 range. The initial four Metagames are as follows.

**COMMAND AT SEA**, a 1/4800 scale naval miniatures game, is the first of a series on naval conflict from the advent of dreadnaughts to the end of World War II. **COMMAND AT SEA** is the basic level game. There will be an intermediate, tournament level rules set and an advanced set. The intermediate rules were those used by the play-testers and developers once they learned the system. The advanced rules are for the true buff, the guy who wants to play for days on one battle. Other materials in the system will include scenario packs covering various battles and ships. The game will come with ship counters for those who don't want to buy scale ships. Also, those who own 1/2400 scale ships will find it easy to convert scales.

**HITLER'S WAR** is a game for those who liked **STELLAR CONQUEST** and/or always wanted to fight out WWII from scratch. Two or three gamers play the Allies, Germany and Russia. You control production, military and technology. Germans can develop Nuclear bombs. The game can play out in 4 - 6 hours, not days as with some WWII recreations.

**THE TROJAN WARS**. It plays right out of the pages of the Illiad. Counters are individual heroes, chariots and such. The gods can intervene, battles are fought over and troops are rallied. The game is strong in the individualistic flair of combat between heroes as opposed to combat between armies.

The other Metagame is **THE AIR-EATERS STRIKE BACK**, a sequel to **INVASION OF THE AIR-EATERS**. The aliens have returned to the solar system when man has spread out and made ready to reach the stars. **STRIKE BACK** uses a similar play system to **INVASION** with movement in space, new units and other rule enhancements. Those who missed, or misunderstood, **INVASION** will find **STRIKE BACK** a playable challenge. The third air-eaters game is also in the works.

The new Metagame series wasn't heavy on history by design. Those just happened to be the first four manuscripts finished.

Most Metagames will be fantasy and science fiction. The new size will be used for games that are too big or too complex for micro size. Everything that can reasonably fit the micro format will go there. We see no reason to publish games in larger formats merely to raise the retail price.

One last comment on price. There have been a few letters from gamers who think that the micros went into boxes to justify a dollar price increase. Wrong. The first micro went on sale in January 1977. Since that time inflation has increased such that the original \$2.95 price for a micro would now be \$4.35. You'll note that the \$3.95 boxed micro price is 40 cents under that with thicker, full-die cut counters. Those who complained about losing their plastic bag for counter storage should note that all micros assembled since November 1980 have a plastic baggie inside.

Howard Thompson

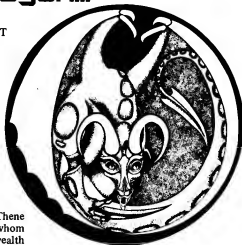


## the silver dragon...

### THE SILVER DRAGON'S SECRET

A First Hand Account of the  
Recovery of the  
"Treasure of the Silver Dragon"

by Thomas Davidson



I am called by my own people M'Thene the Pretender. To the Toltecs, to whom power means controlling others and wealth means gold, I am only known as Huereca. For several years now I have been at their University of Tejas, the largest in the Toltec Empire, learning their advanced alchemy, and keeping the secret of my identity as Follower of the Dragons.

When the fragment of Nalzec Hunate's notebook arrived here, it was evidently taken very seriously, he related his efforts to save the secret of the Silver Dragon from destruction by the Toltec Brujos, and had already acquired a sheaf of reports from Brujos sent to scout the area where poor Huante the thief had last been seen. While the Toltecs may be corrupted by desires for gold and glory, their minds are very clever and determined. I knew that I must act quickly, lest the secret fall into their hands and be lost forever.

Two things attracted my attention immediately. First was a short, coded message that quickly unravelled as a slogan of an old branch of the Yanqui cult: "Give me Liberty or Give me Death." attributed to the ancient martyr Na-Than-Hayl. The other item was small maps sent in independently by the many Brujo scouts. The Toltecs in their lust for more lands to rule, have a high state of the art of land-measure, so I chose to trust these maps separately. I assembled them in the manner of the old childrens puzzle of fitting potsherds together. Now I have an area map and a locale map, along with the hint that the area was of interest to the Yanqui cult.

There was also the bonus of several sketches of area suitable for campsites and other special purposes (the more experienced Brujo scouts are very thorough). One of these I noticed, portrayed many of the same unique details of which Nalzec Huante wrote. It must have been the very area in which the poor thief concealed the secret! Now if only I could locate the area, I could find the secret for sure.

Alas, the Toltecs (curse their greed!) had chosen to delete from their reports any knowledge of the area they searched. They feared some enemy might find the treasure before they. But Huante had written of a "glinting white totem of energy" that should serve as a landmark, and the reports indicated a Toltec interest in the psyenergy of the sun in that area at about the time Huante the Brave was last seen.

I seemed to be at a dead end; all other clues were inscrutable. As I went to bed I made a short prayer to Sugmad, the god to whom Wisdom is Wealth and Self Knowledge is Power. In a dream, my god favored me with the understanding I needed and the gas to cast the secret as seed in the wind, that it may never be endangered by greed again. The understanding was that the totem of power was a tool for studying the sun!

The next morning I went directly to the library and found, after some study of scrolls, that the Toltecs had just three such tools of importance throughout the Empire. I noted their names and locations and went to another part of the library to check the most recent maps of the area involved. Lo, and Eureka! One of the sun tools was in an area that mapped out just like the area of the search. The tool was at a place called "Sunspot" in the Sacramento Mountains of the New Mexico region of the Empire.

Sky Goats Village appeared on the library map in the proper place, under the Yanqui name "Cloudcraft", with roads marching the same paths on both maps. Further, all rivers, mountains, and cities matched when comparing the library map and the area map. Finally, the lands had been marked as sacred to the Yanquis. It was sacred land of the type called "National Forests", dedicated to the Yanqui martyr Lincoln. I recalled a poem in the reports, one concerning a martyr for freedom as the Venerable Lincoln had been. I knew I had found the Huante's hiding place.

It was almost as hard to convince my new bride, the Lady Shan, of my success as it was to discover the location in the first place. Finally, with a wise share of skepticism for which I will always respect her, she consented to accompany me on the actual quest.

Once the decision was made, all tension and anxiety passed from me as softly as the morning fog. On a higher reality the deed had somehow already been done; it only awaited its performance in the flesh. We knew we must move quickly for there was no way of knowing how close the cursed Toltecs were to learning what I had learned.

To protect us from the Curse of Murphy ("Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong") we told no one of the true purpose of our quest. What Murphy does not know about, he cannot curse. To cover our

absence, we told others we were going to the Mines of Coba ("Carlsbad" in the Yanqui tongue), and joined a small caravan under the Grey Dog banner to that town.

After a short trip to the mines (lest we be liars), we hired mounts in Coba and journeyed first to Sky Goats Village, then to the sun tool itself. We spent a chilly night sleeping in the open not far from the pillar of the sun, confident of success in the morning. The Lady Shan and I were uplifted by the beauty of countless stars—each a glittering spark whose charm is only for those bold enough to drop their shackles and chase a dream.

In the morning we returned to the white pillar and retraced the steps of the Flight of Huante the Brave. Quickly, we found his short loop road, and later with more caution, the dead standing tree and large flat stump of which he wrote. A renewal of my promise to my god and a blessing for the essence that was known as Nalzec Huante eased my mind.

Then under a camouflage of leaf-litter, stone, and dead sticks of wood, I located a small depression perhaps 30 centimeters across and barely a thumb's breadth deep in the center—a final clue that would have eluded all but the faithful servants of a caring god. Barely 3 cm. below this surface and four feet from the stump I found a small chest. Nalzec Huante had the foresight to seal the secret within it before he consigned his hopes to the shallow mountain soil. As the Lady Shan and I forced the chest open, there was a strange pause in time and we were frozen by a voice like a great bell. The voice said only this: "The line between Reality and Illusion is itself only an illusion."

So this is the secret of the Silver Dragon, and its true treasure: That a man makes his own Reality even if it includes things held to be only illusions by all his fellows. For somewhere within him is the spark of god, who makes all things real, just as somewhere, in a world with little buried treasure and no dragons, there is a man who has found both.

The secret is no longer a secret, and is safe from the Toltec repressions. The Yanquis have rewarded our efforts with gold, which the Lady Shan manages well. I am at peace with my god for a job well done, at the small cost of my own secret. Our people hear a message of hope, and the Toltecs hear one of defeat.

And somewhere, I hope Nalzec Huante works hard at becoming what he could have been.



## CROSSROADS: CIDRI

by Guy W. McLimore, Jr.

To a traveller in search of adventure on the byways of Cidri, a crossroads means a decision and an opportunity. Each path may lead to glory, to wealth, or to death. At this crossroads, I hope to meet with my fellow adventurers and pass along some information on where we are going, and what we expect to do with THE FANTASY TRIP. In return, you will have the opportunity to give us suggestions and information on how the TFT game system can best serve your needs.

Since this is our first meeting, introductions are in order. As the new editor of THE FANTASY TRIP game system (since late June 1980) I've had the opportunity to meet quite a few TFT players and game masters at Origins, GenCon and Wintercon. This magazine, however, will be the only way I get to talk with most of you, so here's a quick background.

I am 26, and have been playing fantasy

role-playing games since 1974 (when you could count the number of FRP's on the thumb of one hand...). At the time I was doing post-graduate work in journalism and communications at Indiana University. I have since returned to my hometown of Evansville in the southern tip of Indiana, where I serve as wargaming specialist for a small but long-established hobby shop.

My first experience with Metagaming came with the release of OGRE. Like so many people I was delighted with the MicroGame concept. MELEE especially struck a chord with me, as I felt that fantasy "sword and shield" combat rules up to that time had been too dependent on die rolls and not flexible enough to allow for the use of reasonable combat tactics. As a long-time member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, a national medieval studies group, I knew the difference between the popular conception of archaic weapons combat and how such weapons really performed. MELEE bridged the gap with a game that was accurate, dynamic and fun. I was hooked.

My hobby shop job and my interest in the MicroGames led to the planning



of the first MicroTournament. The event, which featured a TFT labyrinth adventure as a prize event, was later written up in THE SPACE GAMER. At the time, I offered the labyrinth as a possible MicroQuest. Howard Thompson, who had been enormously cooperative in the planning of the tournament, agreed to look at the labyrinth, so I hit the typewriter, file cards and carbon paper flying. In the middle of the final draft, the idea struck me for a different sort of adventure. (An idea does 1 + 2 damage and counts as a thrown weapon, by the way, for those of you who keep track of such things...) Thus was born GRAILQUEST, which was eventually published as MicroQuest No. 3. (The original adventure is still uncompleted...)

All this led to my attendance at Origins '80. Steve Jackson had earlier left Metagaming to found his own publishing firm, and TFT was without an editor. I expressed an interest (to put it mildly...) and Howard agreed to try me in the job. (He didn't even make me grovel, and I had a nice grovel saved up, too...)

This probably-less-than-fascinating recitation of my personal history leads to a point—Metagaming is a very open company. The MicroGame concept was built on a policy of encouraging new designers, and that policy still stands today with THE FANTASY TRIP. As TFT editor, it is my job to see to it that our game system is YOUR game system, reflecting the features and expansions you want to use. Bring your fantasies—there's room for everyone. Cidri is BIG!

To give you some idea of how wide-ranging Metagaming's plans are for TFT (and to avoid duplication of effort on projects already begun...) here's a little peek into my file of current projects—in-development.

- \* The TFT YEARBOOK, which is probably already out by the time you read this, will be annually updated to keep gamers abreast of the latest rule changes, expansions and new interpretations. It will also contain variants and expansions supplied by gamers and game masters. (The Fantasy Master's Codex was released in April of 1981, ed.)

- \* MASTER OF THE AMULETS features a brand-new concept in solitaire adventures for TFT—no numbered paragraphs, and the game is different each time you play! Several other MicroQuests are in preparation, too, including one by Forest Brown, head honcho of Martian Metals.

- \* The new Metagame format, featuring larger components and more features than

the MicroGames, will have several new TFT releases, including a series of adventure supplements, each centering on one geographical area, time period, or mythological situation. These packages will contain game master material on the subjects, their lifestyle, myths, artifacts and customs. Each will also include a mini-adventure to get you started, plus maps, counters and game aids. In the works are supplements on medieval Japan and China, the Vikings, and Egyptians.

- \* Assuming we can chain Howard Thompson to a typewriter, we should see the first segments of the STARLEADER (formerly STARMAN) science fiction RPG.

- \* The TFT system is too flexible to be forever tied to fantasy/medieval role-playing. Coming soon are TFT-compatible games capturing the excitement of the American Old West, the grim drama of World War II, and the colorful battles and action of the comic-book superhero. Lots of crossover possibilities here, with no hassles over conversion from one system to another.

- \* Also in the Metagame format, look for a beginner-level TFT game with a simplified combat and magic system. The new game is designed to be playable by those with absolutely no role-playing experience, but experienced TFT gamers will be able to plug in advanced rules at any level they choose (MELEE and WIZARD only, or ITL and the advanced modules) and have a game sophisticated enough for any die-hard FRP player. In addition, the game will also provide solo adventurers with a never-ending source of solitaire fun! I won't say more—you'll see it soon enough. (If we can even decide what to call it...!)

Wide ranging expansions in the TFT system are in the making. To do it all, we need input from all the people out there playing the game. What areas do we need to explore? What changes need to be made? We need new MicroQuests, new game master adventures, new ideas and creations. Someone is going to write them—why not you?

Next issue, I will provide some hints and suggestions for prospective TFT game designers. Meanwhile, write and let us know what you want us to do. Write me on TFT-related matters c/o Metagaming, Box 15346, Austin, TX 78761. (Keep questions and comments in a separate mailing from orders, please. Otherwise things may go awry. A self-addressed, stamped envelope would be appreciated on questions that need a reply.)

Have fun with your gaming and keep in touch. There's a lot of excitement ahead.



# a micro-microquest...

## VAGABOND THIEF!

by Jerry Epperson

Playtesters: Frank Collins, Roger Minnick, and the Gang From Detroit

VAGABOND THIEF! is a programmed micro-adventure made specifically for use with Metagaming's fantasy role-playing system, THE FANTASY TRIP. It was previously published in a fanzine, THE DECK OF MANY THINGS, and appears here in a slightly revised form. My thanks to the Metro-Detroit Gamers for their excellent hints on playing VAGABOND THIEF!

Playing VAGABOND THIEF! is considerably different than playing the usual solitaire adventure in that it allows a maximum role-playing, with a limited format. Aside from those options shown in each paragraph, there are others which the players will want to devise as they think of them. These, for lack of a better definition, will be called "free-form options".

Free-form options come in four groupings. These are: *Search for Traps* (player must write down what is searched, specifically), *Search for Concealed* (player must write down where the search is being conducted, specifically), *Search Denizen* (player is assumed to searching an unconscious/dead occupant of a room or face automatic death), and *Maverick Action* (player writes down any type of option he/she/it would like to perform, being VERY specific). It is important to note that VAGABOND THIEF! is grounded on the policy of free-form options. If you do not like the idea of a little more work then put this down immediately and read something else in this magazine.

If the player does decide that a little work is worth maximum pleasure, then the procedure to follow when executing a free-form option is given below.

First the player must write down (on paper) EVERY free-form option that the character will attempt, in the order of preferred actions. These are the only actions that the character can perform whenever in the room (e.g. -- it is no fair choosing one free-form option and leaving the room then going back into the room to choose other options after gaining "insight" into what options are allowed). Before executing each option, the player rolls for Wandering Persons (WPs) and if WPs are present then must resolve any combats, etc. before turning to the proper paragraph denoting which free-form options can be executed in the area (see paragraph numbers below). If the paragraph you came

from (you were keeping track of what paragraphs you have been referred to -- weren't you?) is listed in the proper paragraph of the free-form option AND your option written down matches one of those shown, you must roll whatever saving rolls are necessary and use the "Goto" column to find out how your situation has changed.

You may stop making WPs rolls and checking free-form options at anytime you wish, but you may never change any of the options written down and may not execute new options -- perhaps your next character will think of something that your present character has not. . .

As soon as you finish execution of the options you want to do, you can now use the standard options (listed in the paragraph description) to exit the room or continue your traveling.

Whenever a *Search for Traps* option is chosen go to (30). Whenever a *Search for Concealed* option is chosen go to (31). Whenever a *Search Denizen* option is chosen go to (32). Whenever a *Maverick Action* option is chosen go to (33).

WPs are encountered by rolling a die and attaining the result of a "6". WPs are generated by determining their race and class (roll on the character generation tables in TFT: ITL, page 7). They will be usually experienced characters so roll a die and subtract two from this roll. The number, if positive is the number of extra attribute points the WPs have. After everything has been assigned and determined, there is a 2 in 6 chance that the WPs will be city guards and will attack without hesitation, but all others will be, more or less, sneaky types also and must make a reaction roll at -1 (any bonuses you have will aid you). A friendly reaction gets you a sword brother who will split the treasure 50-50 with you, otherwise everything else is a fight.

WPs who fight you will appear in the doorway nearest the outside of building. They will have the initiative on the first round because you will probably be busy doing other things. . .

NOTES ON ENTERING AND EXITING: If you succeed in killing a denizen, that denizen will NOT come back to haunt you and the room is safe. If you leave a room with a living denizen, the denizen will still be there, ready to attack should you re-enter the room. This adventure is programmed to have denizen interact with changing conditions, if you are mistakenly

## ADVANCED WIZARD- A FEW MORE SPELLS

by David Doucette

Most of the spells given in THE FANTASY TRIP: ADVANCED WIZARD that were not in the original game, WIZARD, are spells that are needed only for long term, role-playing games (i.e., campaigns) and not for great offensive/defensive spells suitable for arena combat. Don't get the wrong idea, the new spells are well done and desperately needed since spell durations are now in the minutes or hours instead of seconds. But the number of "Combat Spells" has not really increased, which seems fairly odd. The higher IQ spells should have been the best place for expanding the spell table, creating fiercer spells that would leave beginners green with envy. Instead, the largest expansion is the "Medium Range" of spells (about IQ 13 - 16). This range may seem fairly high to be called Medium within the bounds of the original WIZARD, but considering that there are comments about IQ 30 wizards in TFT:AW for Demon Summoning, the range seems adequate.

The listings of spells given below have their origins before TFT:AW was published,

hence the spells like Light Ray are still given, even though Wizard's Wrath is just as good (of course you could increase the damage and IQ of Wizard's Wrath). I believe that these spells are usable in any game that you play in, be it role-playing or arena combat.

Of course there has to be a limit on the IQ level of a spell. To say that there are spells around IQ 30 would seem to be stretching the rules a bit far. (Unless some gamemaster would agree that it is possible for some player to create a dimensional doorway that one 14 hex dragon appears out of, at every turn, ready to obey the slightest whim of it's summoner...) But there are spells up to IQ 20, even though there are only 3 (count them, THREE) spells each for IQ 19 and 20. The spells given are just enough to wet the curiosity of experienced players but not enough to really be satisfying. What is below is a list of spells that still hold true to the idea of TFT and still keep the game playable, that is, the spells are fairly powerful, but the more powerful being higher in IQ and costly in ST.

Most of the spells listed are expansions of already existing spells, like creation spells (wall, fire, image, etc.) while others are quite different or small variations of an existing spell.

thief, cont.

injured in a fight against a denizen that you have already killed, remove the damage as you did not fight. However, if the room says that everything is dead, and you left someone/something living in the room - be prepared to fight it first.

These are the basic rules. Players are expected to use logic when operating denizen and WPs. Cheating will only cheat you of the challenge in attaining the things you want. When you have created a 32-point thief-type character, go to (1) and begin reading. Good luck and may the gods be at your side when you go under!

1. Being a transient thief, you find yourself cursing your luck and wandering the maze of streets in the city of Canigli. Being jumped and knocked unconscious only to awake with your pockets empty and your head hurting; yes, only you could have such luck. . .at least they left your weapons. Mustering up as much dignity as you can, you feel determined not to remain broke for long.

It has long since turned from day to night and you find yourself stopping in front of the now deserted moneylender shop. Looking around, you feel that the coast is clear.

You may enter through the front door (8) or go meld into the dark shadows of the alleys and scrounge for your food scraps in garbage piles, like a street urchin (15).

2. You are in the front office (see the map below). At the "A" there is a desk and chair, the two other exits are doors at "B" and "C", and you see the glint of a metal chest at the "S". At the "Ds" are two wolves leaping to attack you. You have the initiative. You may run out the front door (21) or fight them (5).

3. As you turn from where you were, you see the definite shape of a man at the "B" (see the map at 2). If you have already encountered and defeated the man behind door "B", then there is a WP at the front door. If you have not encountered the man behind door "B", go to (13) ignoring the first two sentences. Otherwise resolve the WP encounter and go to (7) if you still live. If you die, too bad. END ADVENTURE.

## 1Q 17 SPELLS



**HEAT METAL** (t) The spell heats any metal (rings, swords, metal armor, etc.) to make it blistering to the touch. If used against a piece of jewelry, (ring, amulet, etc.) the person must make a savings throw vs strength on 4 dice or else be unable to use it for for the turn. If used against a weapon, every turn that is used inflicts one hit damage. If used against armor (heh, heh, heh) it will inflict 3 hits per turn. (It takes 5 minutes to get out of armor....) Note that a flesh spell would be a good defense for it, NOT armor. COST: 3 to cast, 1 to maintain.

**STUN** (t) The spell inflicts a psychic stun on the subject, lowers his IQ to 5 (or half, whichever is less) and floors him. It lasts for 2 turns, the victim makes a savings throw on 5 dice vs IQ. COST: 5 ST, 6 for beings with 16 + IQ.

**WEAKNESS** (t) This spell makes the victim very weak, half ST for all purposes but hits, movement is also halved. COST: 4 ST to cast, 1 to maintain.

4. The man is a mage. He has a ST 14, DX 12, IQ 12, and MA 10. He has *Dazzle*, *Reverse Missiles*, *Rope*, *Freeze*, *Fireball*, and *Break Weapon*. He will use *Invisibility* to escape.

Resolve combat normally, as he will not talk. When you put hits on him, go to (9). Use a die to determine what spell the wizard will cast (add 1 to the roll if he is in trouble or has already cast a spell that common sense tells you he would not). If you chase the wizard off or kill him, go to (7). Otherwise, you died. END ADVENTURE.

5. They are standard wolves. Resolve combat normally except that, due to the darkness of the room, everyone fights at -4 DX. If you fire a missile at either wolf, go to (18). If you kill the wolves, go to (7). Otherwise you have died and, aside from being slightly chewed when found and unrecognizable, your carcass will have to be burnt as an act of sanitation. END ADVENTURE.

6. He throws a 4-4 *Fireball* at you (at your least armored party member). Go to (4) for his statistics and resolve his attack.

7. You may leave the moneylender shop at this point. You are in the front office (see the map at 2). You may exit through the front door (20), enter door "B" (10), or enter door "C" (22).

8. The door is locked and requires a 3-die roll against DX (6-die roll for non-Thief talented characters) to unlock it. Keep trying to unlock until you get tired of failing. Roll for WPs prior to each attempt. If you open the door, enter (2) or leave (20). If you cannot unlock the door you can only leave (20).

9. The mage wears a ring of Stone Flesh. It takes 4 hits/attack and is self-powering.

10. The door is locked and requires a 3-die roll against DX (6-die roll for non-Thief talented characters) to unlock it. If you succeed (13), otherwise go to (5) and choose a different option because the door will not open.

11. You hit the snoozing figure and are left clutching a fistful of blankets. You feel like a complete sucker and whirl towards the door only to see it slam shut. You are left in darkness and hear the faint hiss of poisonous gas before dropping into the abyss that is death. END ADVENTURE.

**14 HEX IMAGE (c)** Lets the wizard create any image that covers up to 14 connected hexes. COST: 6 ST.

## IQ 18 SPELLS

**BLIND (t)** Blinds victim, any attack is at -6 DX, any spell is at -3. Victim gets a four dice savings throw vs IQ for it to take effect. COST: 5 ST to cast, one to maintain.

**DIAMOND FLESH (t)** Stops 10 hits per attack. Makes the victims skin as hard as diamonds and yes, he can cut glass. Because of the rigidity of his skin, the spell recipient is at -2 DX, and his movement allowance is down 2. COST: 5 ST to cast, one to maintain.

**LIGHT RAY (m)** Does 1 die + 1 damage for every ST put into it. It is a very powerful beam of light about 1 cm. in diameter. Because of it being so small, it can go through any obstacle without destroying it. It can kill more than one person...

**14 HEX SHADOW (c)** Like any other shadow spell, but affects up to 14 connected hexes. COST: 5 ST.

**14 HEX FIRE (c)** Similar to all the other Fire spells but affects up to 14 connected hexes. COST: 8 ST.

**14 HEX WALL (c)** Similar to wall spells but affects up to 14 connected hexes. COST: 9 ST.

**14 HEX ILLUSION (c)** Creates an illusion of anything that isn't larger than 14 hexes. COST: 8 ST.

**TEMPORARY ENCHANTMENT (t)** Affects any weapon so that it is enchanted 2 ways. First, it adds +1 DX to whomever uses it for every 3 ST used in casting. Second, the weapon is now capable of hitting someone who is under Astral Projection spell or Insubstantiality but cannot be used against someone using Spell Shield or a Pentagram because of the power of the enchantment. COST: 3 ST for each +1, 1 ST to maintain.

## IQ 19 SPELLS

**ANIMATE WEAPON (s)** This powerful spell animates any weapon that the wizard can use in accordance with his strength without any dexterity penalty, and weapon can move at the same rate of the wizard.

thief, cont.

12. You can do whatever you wanted to without changing the situation. Neither good nor bad occurs.

13. You are in a well-lit room (see the map below) and at the "A" stands a man, next to him is a table and chair at the "B". On the table are three crystal balls. You may try to negotiate (6), attempt to leave (23), or fight (4).

14. You detect a magical enchantment similar to a Mage Sight.

15. Reread the title of this adventure once more. I know it sounds dull, but you didn't become a thief for purely masochistic reasons. Take -10 experience points from your total and go back to wherever you were before and start acting like a thief!

16. Go to (12).

17. If the chest did not have its traps removed, go to (24). Otherwise it is locked and requires a 4-die roll against DX (8-die roll for non-Thief talented characters) to unlock. If it opens (28), otherwise it refuses to budge and is too heavy to lift. Go to (7) if you cannot open it.

18. What are you so paranoid for? They have no special powers. Go to (5) and continue the fight.

19. You found a hidden compartment! Inside is a pouch of 3-18 gems. If you have a *Recognize Value* talent (29). Otherwise you must get them appraised when you get out of town (how much you get out of them is up to the game master you game under). Go to (3) when you are done.

20. You leave the moneylender shop and exit the town (roll three times for WPs, if there are any, they will be guards).

If you entered the moneylender shop you gain a bonus 100 experience points, plus 5 for each hour spent in the adventure and 5 for each ST which you lost DUE TO WOUNDS. Contrary to popular belief, pain IS instructive.

If you never entered, you get 0 experience for this adventure (save those received the hard way through wounds).

If you get out of the city, you have enough brains never to return. If you die, that is the risk you took. Either way this is...END ADVENTURE.

Any attack at the weapon is at -8 DX. To destroy the weapon, it must take hits equal to half the strength needed to use it, (minimum of 4), a quarter for a broken weapon. COST: 4 ST (6 ST for 2 handed) and 1 to maintain. (NOTE: every hex distance from the wizard, the weapon is a -1)

**METAMORPH OTHERS (t)** Changes the subject to anything that the spell caster wants. the subject has the same attributes that he had before, and the ordinary abilities of the new creature (armor, attacks, etc.) but not any of the extraordinary abilities (i.e. A dragon cannot breathe fire but can fly.). Any non-magical equipment that is worn changes with the person to the new shape. Magical equipment has a savings throw on 1 dice against the number of spells on the item. (3 or less for 3 spells, etc.) If changed, then it will be useless while in the metamorphosed state. This spell is a temporary version of the Shapeshift spell with some other minor changes. A reluctant victim gets a savings throw 5 dice vs IQ. COST: 5 ST plus 2 for each hex change. (1 hex to 3 hex takes another 4 ST) Plus 1 per minute to maintain.

**METAMORPH SELF (s)** Same as above but COST: 4 ST plus 1 for each hex change, and 2 to maintain.

**LEVITATE (t)** Similar to a flight spell but no DX adjustments. You fly in accordance to your normal movement allowance. COST: 4 ST and 1 to maintain.

**PIT (c)** Creates a one hex pit 12 ft. (4 m.) deep. Falling in causes 1 dice -3 damage. Pit lasts for only 4 turns and anyone that is left inside after that is trapped but not necessarily killed. The pit does not have to be on the floor. COST: 5 ST.

## IQ 20 SPELLS

**EARTHQUAKE (s)** This spell causes a powerful earth tremor that affects everything within 5 megahexes except the wizard. Any creature is thrown violently to the ground (no other actions) and takes 1 hit damage, regardless of armor. The tremor lasts for five turns. If you attempt to get up during the 5 turns, roll 4 dice vs DX to succeed and roll again every other turn to stay up. If you fall again, you take one more hit. If you remain standing, all attacks and spells are at -3 DX, except the wizard's he isn't affected at all. It is not recommended to use if underground. COST: 7 ST.

21. One wolf has followed you out the door which you left open. You must fight him, as he is slightly faster than yourself. Place your character(s) at one end of a standard MELEE map and the wolf at the other.

After the fight, roll for WPs and resolve this encounter. You may now re-enter the moneylender shop (5) and face the remaining wolf. Or you may leave (20). If you die, there are no tears lost on your account. END ADVENTURE.

22. The door opens without a hitch; expend 2 MA. You are in a dark room (see the map below). There is a bed, with someone/something under its blankets at the "B". You may sneak up and attack the figure (11) or leave the room (3).

23. You drop everything you were carrying in your hands in order to lighten your load and exit the shop (20). If you want to retain everything, move one-half your normal MA and go to (6) if you did not clear the door of the shop. The man is now at the "B" (see the map at 2). If half your MA takes you past the threshold, go to (20).

24. There was a *Blast Trap* (3+3 damage) on the chest. If you failed to remove it, take your medicine. The blast will open the chest for you (little consolation if you die), go to (28) if you survive. Otherwise, the blast decorates you against the ceiling. END ADVENTURE.

25. They are crystal balls. Each one shows an image. One of the front of the shop, one of the front room, and the last one shows a dark room (obviously the room behind door "C").

26. If you make the 5-die roll against DX, you escape (20). Otherwise the wolf gets a free attack at your rear (literally). Resolve combat. If you kill the beast, aside from needing a new pair of trousers, go to (20) to leave, re-enter the building (5), otherwise you died. END ADVENTURE.

27. You now have 1-3 crystal balls. Each weighs 5 kgs, and if you get into a fight there is a 3 in 6 chance of one or more breaking. They are worth (collectively) \$5,000. They are cheap and will not be of much use except for a material component into making a real crystal ball - they had an Expunge cast on them and become normal when you leave the moneylender shop.

**FIRE BLAST** (s) This is a missile spell that affects any megahex (or 7 hexes in a cluster). It inflicts one dice damage per hex for every 2 ST the wizard puts into it. Any multihex creature takes appropriate damage. Note that when rolling for the spell to take effect, a result higher than your dexterity would mean nothing happens. On a roll of 16, a fire hex would appear at the center; a 17, a fire hex would appear in the wizard's hex, and 18, (heaven forbid!) the Fire Blast would appear around the wizard. COST: 2 ST for each dice.

**GROUND** (t) Once thrown, the creature that this is thrown upon is unable to fly as long as the spell is maintained. COST: 5 ST and 1 to maintain (2 if the victim's strength is 30 or more).

**SUMMON LARGE DRAGON** (c) Summons a 14 hex dragon (ST 100, DX 14, IQ 24, MA 8 on ground, 24 in air, breath 4 dice, claw 2 + 2) to obey the commands of the wizard. COST: 10 ST to cast, 2 to maintain.

**MULTIPLE CREATION** (s) This spell is a preparation spell for any multihex creation. When a wizard casts this spell the next turn the wizard must do a creation spell (wall, fire, shadow, image, illusion, NOT summon) It will then be possible for the creation to be more than one thing as long as it is not less than one hex each. It would then be possible to have non-connected walls, shadows, etc. or have an illusion of 4 men instead of a 4-hex dragon. Note that any image/illusion still cannot use missile weapons! (arrows are less than one hex in size) COST: 3 ST. + number of hexes creation.

**ENFORCE** (s) Makes ALL illusions within the area of effect more 'realistic' (i.e., harder to disbelieve) by increasing the number of dice to disbelieve by. COST: to cast, 1 ST. per die (minimum of 4, of course) plus 1 ST. per M.H. distance (1 ST. for distance would affect the area of mega-megahex around the wizard) and 1 ST. to maintain for every 3 dice disbelieving.

thief, cont.

28. These chest contains 50 gold pieces, 5,000 silvers, and 1-6 gems. If you have a *Recognize Value* talent, go to (29). Otherwise you will just have to get them appraised elsewhere (how much you get is up to the game master you game under). Write down what you take, refigure all of your encumbrance, and go to (13).

29. This is the section where all of your gems find their worth. If you have *Assess Value* your gems are worth 10% more, but if you have *Recognize Value* only they are worth whatever you come up with.

If you came from 19, each is worth 10-60 x \$1,000. If you came from 28, each is worth 1-6 x \$10.

30. SEARCH FOR TRAPS. All traps are marked with a "spot"/"remove" die roll after each trapped location. If your searched item is not found below, then there are no traps on it. Failing to spot the trap means you cannot attempt to remove it. Failing to remove the trap means that the trap has been triggered. A "-" means that you cannot remove the trap.

Came From:	Searching	Goto:
1	Door (4/1--)	14
4	Table (4/-)	16
7	Chest (4/3)	24
7	Door "B" (4/-)	14
7	Door "C" (4/-)	14
22	"Body" (3/4)	12

31. SEARCH FOR CONCEALED. All concealed things require an *Alertness* roll on 3 dice to see. Failing to do so means you have not found anything.

Came From:	Searching:	Goto:
1	Ground	12
1	Wall	16
7	Chest (inside)	19
7	Chest (outside)	16

by Ron Hopkins

The Fantasy Trip is an excellent fantasy role-playing system which lends itself well to adaptations and variants. The simplicity and clarity of its rules both allow and encourage gamemasters to increase the level of detail and available player options. In the course of running a campaign, I devised an expansion of the rules governing the creation of summoning and explosive gems, which have been extensively tested and found to be both workable and enjoyable.

Basically, it seems logical that if a wizard can create a gem that summons a real creature, he ought to be able to fashion a gem that would, instead, produce an image or illusion creature. Such an item would require less time and effort to make than would a real summoning gem, since the creature would still be subject to dispel, disbelief, or destruction.

Several of the other creation spells, such as fire, wall, and shadow, would seem to be very well suited for gem format. Sticky Floor and Slippery Floor spells are also likely candidates for this

treatment, as well as Dispel Illusions and Destroy Creation.

To implement this concept, replace the CREATE EXPLOSIVE GEM spell with this IQ 16 spell:

**CREATE GEM (S):** Using a standard magical laboratory, a wizard may make summoning, creation, and special gems. Costs, ingredients, strength, and time required are listed on the GEM CREATION TABLE. A wizard must either know the particular spell corresponding to the gem he is creating or possess a book containing that spell. At the end of each week, the wizard must roll three dice versus his dexterity - success means the work may continue; failure means that the gem and ingredients are ruined. An item or effect produced by ordinary spell-casting, except that no ST is ever expended. Anything created by a gem is totally controlled by the person breaking the gem. Anyone may use a gem.

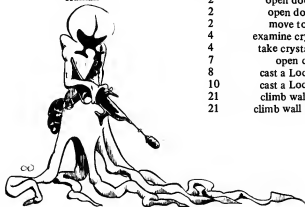
The attached GEM CREATION TABLE gives the particulars of manufacture. Note that ingredients are not listed per week but per gem - failure results in the loss of all ingredients. Also, normal summoning and dazzle gems are no longer Lesser Magic

**32. SEARCH DENIZEN.** Any searched denizen, with automatically yield their items. It is up to the player to be fair about knowing what an item does. If you have observed it in action then you do not need the item analyzed by a wizard, but if you did not see it work, then you must get the thing checked (or use it).

Came From:	Denizen:	Goto:
4	Human	9
5	Wolf	12
21	Wolf	16
22	Human	11

**33. MAVERICK ACTION.** If you do not see your choice here, it is for two reasons. One, the designer did not write it in (you are welcome to add to this list) or two, within the framework of the adventure, the action was deemed to be unnecessary. You may attempt the action, but it will not affect the situation - unless you use your imagination. Only the options shown will change the situation.

Came From:	Action:	Goto:
2	close door/leaving	20
2	open door "B"	10
2	open door "C"	22
2	move to chest	12
4	examine crystal balls	25
4	take crystal ball(s)	27
7	open chest	17
8	cast a Lock/Knock	2
10	cast a Lock/Knock	13
21	climb wall (talent)	20
21	climb wall (no talent)	26



Items but are created through the Create Gem spell.

It is possible to create fire and wall gems which produce longer-lasting effects. These creations are permanent and last until extinguished or destroyed. Being real in every sense, they are unaffected by a Destroy Creation spell or gem. To make one of these items, multiply time, ingredients, and cost by five.

Treat a thrown gem exactly as a thrown weapon, with two exceptions: 1) a gem is thrown at a floor or wall hex, not a figure. A fire gem may not be used like a molotail to set an enemy on fire but only to create a fire in his hex. A wall gem breaking in an occupied hex has no effect. 2) a gem that misses its target hex lands and breaks in a randomly determined hex adjacent to the target. Also, GM's may wish to allow a player to use a sling to hurl a gem an appreciable distance, using missile rather than thrown weapon DX adjustments.

The use of these gems will greatly increase the tactical richness of TFT. For example, a player could hurl a 3-hex wall gem into a corridor ahead of a fleeing foe, neatly trapping him. A hobbit with a pouch

full of explosive gems would be a formidable opponent, indeed. A creature produced by breaking a gem would no longer automatically be real; thus, a judicious mix of real, image, and illusion gems will keep foes guessing. A sticky floor gem is an archer's best friend. A wizard need not spend most of his strength creating fires to kill rats, harass opponents, etc. The possibilities are endless. . .

Gamemasters can construct fiendish traps that, when triggered, drop or break various gems. One such trap might drop a slippery floor gem and release several slimes. Another might drop a sleep gas bomb and a summoning gem. A particularly diabolical trap might drop a permanent 3-hex wall gem in the corridor behind the party, forcing them deeper into the labyrinth. Yet another trap might simply drop 6-die explosive gems! Note that whenever a gem is broken by a non-intelligent agent, such as a trap, the GM would take control of the creation, to the adventurers' detriment.

I hope that these rules will make your game of TFT a little more interesting and challenging. My campaign has certainly been enhanced by them.

#### GEM CREATION TABLE

ITEM	COST	TIME	ST	INGREDIENTS
Dazzle	200	1	25	4 gm jewel dust
Slippery Floor	600	2	25	2 Decrease DX potions
Sticky Floor	600	2	25	2 Decrease DX potions
*Wolf/Myrmidon	400	1	75	6 gm jewel dust
*Bear	800	2	75	5 gm jewel dust
*Gargoyle	1200	3	75	4 gm jewel dust
*Giant	2300	5	75	5 gm jewel dust
*4-hex Dragon	3500	7	75	10 gm jewel dust
*7-hex Dragon	7000	11	75	25 gm jewel dust
**1-hex Fire	100	1	25	½ gm jewel dust
**3-hex Fire	300	2	25	3 gm jewel dust
**7-hex Fire	800	3	50	1 gm jewel dust
**1-hex Wall	200	1	50	1 gm jewel dust
**3-hex Wall	650	2	50	3 gm jewel dust
**7-hex Wall	1600	4	50	10 gm jewel dust
1-hex Shadow	150	1	50	None
3-hex Shadow	400	2	50	None
7-hex Shadow	1000	3	50	None
+Explosive	150/die	1/die	25	2 Explosive Mushrooms/die
Dispel Illusions	800	3	50	1 gm jewel dust
Destroy Creation	250	1	25	6 gm jewel dust

Cost in \$, Time in weeks.

1 gm jewel dust - \$20

1 Decrease DX potion - \$80

1 explosive mushroom - \$10

\*Illusion Gem - 2/3 times cost, ingredients, time

\*Image Gem - 1/3 times cost, ingredients, time

\*12 Turn Summoning - 1.5 times cost, ingredients, time

+Cost, time and ingredients required to make an explosive gem depend on the number of dice damage it produces.

\*\*These items may be made to last indefinitely, rather than 12 turns - 5 times cost, ingredients, time



# the Fantasy Masters' Codex and Screen



## \*THE FANTASY MASTERS' CODEX, 1981 (No. 2301)

The first annual reference guide to THE FANTASY TRIP role-playing system. A 120-page booklet (8½X11) with full color cover, the CODEX includes an index to weapons, talents, spells, magic items, monster tables, and much more! It indexes all TFT titles published through 1980. Available in limited quantities. Retail price: \$9.95

## \* THE FANTASY MASTERS' REFERENCE SCREEN (No. 2302)

A two-fold cardstock screen to be used as a playing aid by TFT players and Fantasy Masters. It includes often-used charts, lists, and tables in an easy-reference format. Retail price: \$2.95

# designer's notes...

## THE AIR-EATERS STRIKE BACK: A DESIGNER'S INTRODUCTION

by Keith Gross



In 1983, the Aliens had underestimated the natives of Earth, and, as a result, their colonization attempt had failed. The Terrans developed disintegrator tanks, imitations of the Alien's own crawlers, with amazing speed, and destroyed the Alien ground forces. They also developed Corvettes, which chased the Alien Mothership away from Earth orbit. The Mothership itself escaped, to begin another long, slower-than-light interstellar journey, to search for its sistership which had also been sent to this part of the galaxy.

The Mothership found the sistership at Altair, together with a thriving Alien colony world. There, the first Mothership's crew conferred with the Planners of the Altair colony. The Aliens were alarmed by the fact that the Terrans, who had only recently invented electricity, were able to imitate their force fields. The Terrans would probably develop star travel in a few centuries. Moreover, the Terrans were hostile and aggressive creatures, who fought even among themselves and who certainly wouldn't hesitate to destroy alien worlds. The Terrans would have to be destroyed, before they destroyed the Aliens. The Terrans MIGHT destroy themselves, but the Aliens couldn't afford to count on this. Thus, the Alien Planners decided to send a military expedition, consisting of both Motherships and two large warships, to Sol.

THAT force should certainly be sufficient to eliminate the Terrans—and to colonize Earth, which was still a rich and valuable planet.

Once again, however, the Aliens had underestimated the Terrans. The Terrans had not destroyed themselves, but rather had become unified and strong. The first Alien invasion had triggered a true world commonwealth, just as World War I had been followed by the League of Nations and World War II had been followed by United Nations. During the invasion, emergency powers had been given to the U.N.: first, command of armed forces and industrial policies by the Security Council; then replacement of the dollar, pound, mark, yen, and ruple by the U.N. Credit; and finally the granting of taxation and conscription powers to the U.N. After the war, the U.N. had retained these powers to assist with reconstruction. Meanwhile, a profound psychological and spiritual change was taking place. Confrontation with an alien civilization increased the general awareness of how unimportant the differences between humans were. Loyalty to the human race became more important than loyalty to one's race or country. The major religions merged into a new world religion. Thus, the war with the Aliens brought about a new, stable economic system and a spirit of cooperation. This enabled the Terrans to rebuild quickly, and then to expand into other parts of the Solar System. When the Aliens returned, they found rich mining bases on Mercury, the asteroids, and Callisto, which supported prosperous cities not only on Earth, but also in space, on Luna, and on Mars as well.

This is the background for THE AIR EATERS STRIKE BACK, the sequel to INVASION OF THE AIR EATERS. The rules are similar, but game play is much different. STRIKE BACK is an interplanetary war, which centers around space fleets fighting for control of the space around important planets. Usually, the actual invasion of Earth and the air conversion occur only in the final stages of the game. INVASION, on the other hand, is largely a race against time for the Aliens; the Aliens try to convert Earth's atmosphere before Terran technology advances too far.

The map for THE AIR EATERS STRIKE BACK consists of several sections. The largest part is a polar-grid display of the Solar System out to the orbit of Jupiter. The polar grid was designed so that each

planet's "year" is the proper number of turns. Planet counters move on this display, as do spaceships.

Ground units move on maps of the surface of each planet, all in the same scale. These maps are based on NASA photographs, which, incidentally, are available for all of the planets and satellites included. The maps were originally quite detailed, at least for their scale, but most of the detail is useless for play and might not be in the production version of the game. For Venus, only the north and south polar regions are included, because Venus would need a map almost as large as Earth's, which would hardly ever be used in play. The only asteroids are Ceres, Pallas, and Vesta; and only the four large moons of Jupiter are included; because the other asteroids and moons are smaller than one hex.

Industrial Units on these maps represent "industry" or capital-producing activities of all type, from robot mining operations in the asteroids to rice-growing in Southeast Asia. IUs are on the poles of Mercury, the near side of the moon, a space colony in Earth orbit, equatorial regions of Mars, the asteroid belt, Ceres, and Callisto (a moon of Jupiter), as well as Earth. Very large space colonies in Earth orbit are actually more probable than cities on Mars, but space colonies would be too vulnerable to Alien attack. The game would be less interesting and less balanced if the Martian IUs were in Earth orbit, and also less realistic, given the "history". Earth's IUs are re-arranged a bit from *INVASION OF THE AIR EATERS* to reflect the development of the Third World at the expense of Europe and the Soviet Union. Many of the off-Earth IUs cannot be used for the placement of new Terran units because they are not manufacturing centers, but rather sources of raw materials for other industrial units.

The Alien unit types are the same as in *INVASION* (Motherships, Escorts, Landers, Crawlers, Bases, and Atmospheric Converters), but two new spaceship types have been added: the Novaship and the Quasarship. Both are Alien warships, with powerful defensive force-fields, good space combat attack capability, and the ability to do orbital bombardment of Terran ground units and industry several times per turn. The Quasarship is more powerful than the Novaship, but, because it cannot be economically moved between stars, it cannot be in the initial forces. Quasarships must be built during the game, at well-established Alien colonies.

The Terran units are in some cases the same as in *INVASION*, but many more advanced units are added. The Terrans start with Disintegrator Tanks and Cor-

vettes, the most advanced units of *INVASION*, and can develop still more powerful units. The Terrans also have Transport interplanetary spacecraft. The Terrans can develop Improved Transports, which are faster, nuclear-powered transports; Bounce Infantry, which is Starship Troopers-type armored infantry; Improved Submarine Fleets; Space Fighter Squadrons, which consist of small orbital craft with good attack ability; and successive improvements of interplanetary warships: the Destroyer, Cruiser, and Battleship. All have force fields and weapons modeled after those of the Aliens. Power plants range from chemical, in the Corvette, to fusion, in the Battleship.

The sequence of play is simpler than that of *INVASION*. However, the essential feature is retained: the Aliens move last and fire first. This has profound effects on the game's play.

In the Introductory Game, Terran space units have fixed Movement Factors. Alien spaceships can move an unlimited distance, because they are starships moving over short interplanetary distances. A Mothership can accelerate at  $1/2g$  (4.8 m/sec.) indefinitely, which allows it to go  $1.45 \times 10^{14}$  meters in three months from rest, which is a Movement Factor of 11,163. For the game, this is infinite.

Space units can land or take-off before doing interplanetary movement, but not afterwards. Actually, landing and lifting-off would take only a few hours, negligible in a three-month turn, so a space unit should be able to lift-off, move between planets, and land in a single turn. However, then enemy space units would not have a chance to attack it. Aliens could land on Earth at will, ignoring Terran space fleets orbiting Earth, and Terran transports could scurry between Earth and Mars past Alien spaceships. For interception to be realistic, spaceships should not be able to lift-off or land before or after interplanetary movement. The present system is a compromise, which allows spaceships to leave a planet without delay or danger, but not land. The interception rules for *FREEDOM IN THE GALAXY* are more realistic, though much more complex, and can be adopted by gamers who want this realism.

Ground movement is as in *INVASION OF THE AIR EATERS*, except that Terran air transport on Earth is more effective. Combat procedures are identical. The Combat Results Tables are compatible, except that Motherships no longer have offensive capabilities and Corvettes are a bit less powerful. (Weaponry has been reduced to allow for the fuel and life support for interplanetary journeys.)

Orbital bombardment is done much like combat, except that the attacker is in space and the target is on the ground. More powerful ships can bombard several times per turn. Both the Aliens and Terrans can bombard, but the aliens get more use out of it, since Terran industry is more vulnerable than either side's combat units.

Terran Production and Research & Development are unchanged from INVASION, except that new unit types are added to the tables.

In the Introductory Game, the Aliens receive fixed reinforcements. These are not produced in the Solar System, but rather are beamed in from Altair. The INVASION rules state that a unit may be beamed an *unlimited* distance. This does not mean just New York to China. Unfortunately, beaming is not instantaneous (except to the individuals being beamed), but only at the speed of light -- an important difference in star travel.

The Introductory Game is easy to learn, but it lacks the opportunities for strategy of the other versions. It consists mostly of attack on and defense of Earth's industry. Alien colonization and production aren't provided for in the rules, and Terran space movement is too slow to make defense of the Terran colonies feasible.

The Intermediate Game adds the Alien Bases and Atmospheric Converters which are so essential to INVASION. It also has a new system for Terran space movement which includes inertia. The Intermediate Game is the version which has all of the essentials but none of the "chrome".

Aliens can beam between bases on different planets. Unlike the Introductory Game, the aliens do not receive reinforcements beamed in from Altair.

As in INVASION, Alien production is done by rolling a die for each Base and consulting a chart. However, the chart is more complicated because the Solar System has more environments than just Earth does and because the die roll depends on the unit type being produced. An assumption is made that different industrial processes, requiring different natural resources, are involved for each type of unit. Crawlers, which require solar energy, are most easily produced on and around the inner planets. Atmospheric Converters, which require atmospheric pressure, are best produced on Venus and Jupiter. Bases, which require environments that are relatively habitable for Aliens, are most easily produced on Earth and Io. Landers can be built easily on Earth and Europa, because they have water. Spaceship production can be done only in space, by Motherships. Production of a Novaship requires the support of a

planetary Base, and production of a Quasarship requires the support of a planet which has been "converted" to the Alien's liking.

Atmospheric Converters work not only on Earth, but also on Venus, Mars, and Ganymede. Successful conversion of a planet's atmosphere allows production of Quasarships and doubles production of other unit types. On Io, crawlers accomplish atmospheric conversion.

The Advanced Game and Optional Rules add to the framework of the Intermediate Game. The Martian Moons rule allows the Aliens to push Deimos and Phobos onto the Martian surface. The Free Asteroid rule allows the Aliens to push an asteroid from the asteroid belt onto an inner planet. Besiegement of Planets and Repair of Industry affect Terran production. Simultaneous Combat and Continuing Combat rules make the combat procedure more realistic, but tip play-balance in favor of the Terrans. Suggestions are also included for incorporating miscellaneous INVASION rules into STRIKE BACK.

Strategy is open-ended, but complex. Planning is important, especially to the Aliens. The Terrans must plan their space movement, or else inertia will work for them instead of for them. The Aliens must plan their production and co-ordinate this with their attacks. Novices might find Terran spaceships drifting about the Solar System and Alien production at a standstill. They might also find the Terrans winning, because the basic lessons for the Terrans are easier to learn than those for the Aliens.

In INVASION, the Alien player can often do well by landing lots of Bases and Atmospheric Converters on Earth on the first turn. If he tries this in STRIKE BACK, he will find his ground forces blown apart on the second turn. On the other hand, hit-and-run strikes by Lander-Crawler teams on Earth's industry, which don't work well in INVASION, are a relatively effective tactic in STRIKE BACK. These strikes won't conquer the Earth, but can weaken it for a late-game invasion. Landing forces underwater on Earth can also work well, since the Terrans are much weaker there than on land on Earth.

Other Alien strategies for STRIKE BACK aren't possible in INVASION. These involve the selection of a planet to build up as a base, from which to stage a powerful assault on Earth late in the game. Each planet has advantages and disadvantages. Mercury is good for production initially, but can't be converted. Venus, on the other hand, can be converted easily, but is worthless before being converted. Luna has the advantage that Land-

ers can go directly to Earth, but it is poor for production and is easily attacked by the Terrans. Mars can be converted, but, like Luna, it is very vulnerable to Terran attack. In the asteroids, Escorts can be built easily, but ground units cannot be. The moons of Jupiter are difficult for the Terrans to attack, because of their distance from Earth, but Io and Ganymede take longer to convert than the inner worlds do. Also, spacecraft production is relatively slow in the Jupiter system. Generally, the Aliens will have to establish a base or two on secondary-staging-area planets, because no planet except Earth offers easy production of all unit types. Beaming units between planets is an important technique for the Aliens.

The Aliens must also attempt to reduce Terran production. They are forced to decide between building strike units (Nova-ships and Crawlers) and building production units (Bases and Atmospheric Converters).

Also, the Aliens should not allow Terran technology to advance too rapidly. Terran technology depends on Alien technology and Terran-Alien contacts. The Aliens should fight only when they can get some benefit from it.

One might expect the Terrans to have an easier time than in *INVASION*, but this isn't so. Time is no longer always on the side of the Terrans. Moreover, the Terrans have to contend with Alien space fleets that can do orbital bombardment.

The Terran player will quickly realize that his space forces are of two types: scouts and "Grand Fleets". Scouts are single units that can be easily destroyed by the Aliens, but which will give the Terrans prerequisites and die-roll-modifiers for research when they are attacked. A "Grand Fleet" is a force large enough to withstand an attack by the entire Alien fleet, and then inflict losses on the enemy. Small fleets are generally useless. Remember that spaceships can be kept on the ground, and that sometimes this is safer than having them in space. If Aliens are in the Jupiter system, the Terrans usually can't afford to send a "Grand Fleet" that far, but they can't afford to ignore the threat either. Scouts are called for.

The countermix limits can affect play. The Terrans, in particular, often produce

all of the units of a particular type. The countermix is limited not only to allow the game to be published at low cost, but also for reasons of play-balance and realism.

The Aliens are allowed to crash spaceships onto planets, as in *INVASION*. However, they are not allowed to do so at light-speed, even though the ships are capable of approaching the speed of light. A Mothership has a rest mass of three million tons and a rest length of two kilometers, the size of a small asteroid. With a velocity approaching that of light, a Mothership would have far more energy than a slow-moving asteroid, just as a .45 bullet has more energy than a pebble thrown by a small boy, and would be able to destroy the Earth. Moreover, the Terrans would never know what hit them; they would see only a red-shifted blur shortly before impact. However, the Aliens still hope to conquer the Earth intact to establish a colony. A light-speed kamikaze attack on Earth could not be done after the beginning of the invasion, since the ship would need a great deal of time and "running space" to build up speed again. AGAIN, *DANGEROUS AIR-EATERS*, a third Air-Eaters game, will include this tactic.

Multi-player rules allow expansion of the basic game to include five players. For gamers who tire of the basic Alien-invasion-of-the-Solar-System scenario, three other scenarios are included. One is a solitaire scenario in which the Terran player tries to stop a pair of randomly-moving Quasarships. The second is the Martian Revolt scenario, in which Earth tries to quickly crush a rebellion by Martian colonists. Earth has far greater industrial capacity, but the Martians have more advanced technology. In "Expansion in the Solar System", Earth and Mars are engaged in mostly peaceful economic competition to develop Mercury and the asteroid belt.

**THE AIR EATERS STRIKE BACK** is the fourth of the five games that I have designed for Metagaming so far. It was designed during the six months I was a full-time employee of Metagaming. **THE AIR EATERS STRIKE BACK** borrows ideas from *STELLAR CONQUEST* and from an old GDW game, *TRIPLANETARY*, and, of course, from *INVASION OF THE AIR EATERS*. The game is bound to be compared to SPI's *BATTLEFLEET MARS*, which also has moving planets. For the record, though, I have never played *BATTLEFLEET MARS*.

**THE AIR EATERS STRIKE BACK** has fairly simple rules and can be played in 90-120 minutes, but it has a lot of scope and is challenging to play. I hope that gamers will enjoy it.



## TO ROMMEL'S PANZERS

## (METHODS TO MADNESS)

By: Roger Damon

It was the second day of the offensive. Captain Carlson of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment had just spent the last two days roaming the desert in search of battles that had never materialized. With three Stuart light tanks under his command, they had shot at, and missed a total of two distant enemy armored cars. He had settled into a night leaguer with two of the new Grant tanks. BBC broadcasts could be picked up on the radio. They indicated that the offensive was going well. "You wouldn't know it by me," he thought as he drifted into a sleep that would become rare in the days that followed.

Dawn arrived, cold and clear. Tank crews were just finishing their fuelups from the two lorries that had arrived during the night and were preparing to brew up their morning tea. Captain Carlson was looking over a map, trying to determine where a bearing of 210 degrees would take him. He had been ordered to follow that bearing until he met the enemy. Major Roper, the commander of the Grants, approached. Carlson looked up and was about to speak when he heard the first distant clanking rumble of tanks on the move. He anxiously scanned the horizon for a sign of them. The view was limited by the slight rises all about, and morning dew prevented any telltale dust clouds. The leaguer came alive with activity. Crews raced for their vehicles. Water for tea, on the verge of boiling, was left behind. The crews hoped the tanks were friendly, as now the first few were appearing over a distant ridge. Puffs of smoke burst from their gun barrels, followed by one of the lorries erupting in flame. They weren't friendly.

Carlson was slipping on his headset when he heard the loud clank of shell hitting armor. "Turret left," came automatically from his lips as he spun around to see a pair of German Panzer IIs lobbing shells in his general direction. "Driver, advance left!" he shouted. As the Stuart began moving, he heard, and felt, another loud clank. The Stuart jerked once, and the engine died. A shell had penetrated the outer armor and became lodged in the transmission. To Captain Carlson, it was the sound of doom.

By now, the turret was around. The 37mm barked. One of the IIs exploded. A louder clank, this one made by a flanking Panzer III, came from a shot that had barely been deflected by the Stuart's armor. It prompted Captain Carlson to yell, "Bail out!"

Thus begins the first scenario of ROMMEL'S PANZERS-Dawn Attack. The scenario introduces the player to some of the major armored vehicles of the desert war, as well as exposing them to some of the tactics available. The goal is survival, and the basis is armor in the desert.

**DESIGN-** The intention of the design was to offer a representation of tactical armored combat in a Microgame format. To do this, I decided to start with a core unit and work from there. The core unit was the Stuart light tank. Once its values of ten attack factors, ten defense factors, and ten movement factors were decided upon, all other units were factorized from their relationship to this unit. The results were tied together with the hit effects table to give a unit roughly the same capabilities its historical counterpart had. I feel this was achieved to an acceptable degree.

ROMMEL'S PANZERS was intended to be played, not studied. When one tank shot another, so many factors came into play that to simulate them would bog down any game with rules and die rolls. I chose to generalize these conditions and boil them down into a compact, playable system. The only important thing after a tank is hit is the damage caused. Whether the crew panicked, or the gun barrel was shot off, or its commander fainted, or it exploded; the end result of it no longer firing and functioning normally is more important, in the scope of the game, than why it quit functioning. This simplified combat results.

**HISTORY-** The game pits armor against armor in the relatively open terrain of the North African desert in those darker years of 1941-42. Here, the British met the Germans on more equal terms than those of France in 1940. Here, the opposing armies vied, not for territory, but for the destruction of the enemy's forces; And that meant the destruction of the enemy's armor, for, in the desert, armor ruled.

The period covered is from the arrival of the American Stuart light tank in the summer of 1941, to the fall of Tobruk and the slow withdrawal to the El Alamein line of the summer of 1942. During this time, neither side had any significant advantage in quantity. Operation Crusader, the

British offensive of November, 1941, started with approximately 450 British tanks and 410 German ones. Although 40 tanks can be significant, most were of the inferior Crusader type. Although neither the Grant tank, nor the Illj had arrived yet in any quantity, the Germans had a slight edge in overall quality.

The biggest problem the German army had was in dealing with the massive Matilda. This tank, though relatively unchanged since its introduction in 1939, was quite a headache for the German commanders. It had a cast hull and turret with 70 plus millimeters of armor all around. It was intended primarily for infantry support and significantly under-gunned. The cast turret rendered it useless for any up-gunning without a massive tooling-up process back at the factories.

The conversion of the 88 millimeter anti-aircraft gun to an anti-tank role was an appropriate solution to the threat of the Matilda. It inadvertently gave the German Panzers a mystique that has survived to a degree even today. British intelligence knew little of this weapon, and British prisoners showed surprise when they learned that it was anti-aircraft guns, and not enemy tanks, that were knocking out their Matildas at incredible ranges.

Evidence of a massive battle filled Sargeant Stryker's radio with conflicting and confusing reports. He had orders to attack the British flank, but he was having difficulty finding it. Topping an escarpment to more closely observe a distant dust cloud, he saw something that pleased him much more than the British flank would have. Not more than 500 meters away was a British convoy working its way along a desert track. The heat rippled the desert air, and compounded with the rising dust and some intervening ridges, obscured the exact nature of the convoy. The sargeant sent his faster Panzer IIs in first. They soon radioed back that there were about ten British lorries with three anti-tank guns being towed. No enemy armor could be seen.

It was too good to be true: since headquarters had gone awry the previous day, he had stumbled into the command of some twenty tanks. This more recent turn of luck, discovering an unescorted enemy convoy, was unbelievable!

Sargeant Stryker scanned the horizon with his field glasses. He spotted distant moving lumps that, in the desert, often meant tanks. He ordered his heavier armor to a defensive position while the lighter moved in on the trucks.

The lighter tanks opened fire. One, then another of the trucks exploded. They looked helpless, as they recklessly scattered in search of cover and escape. Stryker looked back to the right. The dark lumps had become British tanks. He watched them disappear behind a low ridge. Seconds later, their turrets slinked over the ridge. One immediately exploded in a burst of smoke as his tanks fired. Almost simultaneously, the remaining British tanks fired. The loud clank of a shell bouncing off the frontal armor of his new Illj startled him. It also caused some slight dismay. It took winded gunners to fire at that range. Ordering his turret around to return fire, he scanned the battlefield. Smoke columns were rising where the trucks were first sighted, but dust was beginning to hamper vision. Farther to the left, more British tanks were arriving- heavier tanks! He quickly ordered his turret back to the left and commanded his gunner to fire on one of the funny looking tanks. He felt a strange twinge of fear mixed with curiosity as he saw that it had a second gun, un-turretted and low on the hull. It was that second gun that fired on a Panzer IV, totally destroying it. More dismay followed as he saw a shot from his own long 50mm gun hit the strange tank and ricchet high into the air. Excitement overcame fear, and he inched higher above the turret. The new tank was now turning toward him. With a puff of smoke, another Panzer IV shot at the tank. It stopped moving. The turret began turning toward him. It also stopped as his 50 shot again, this time doing some damage. Smoke began rising from the rear of the tank. Men were scrambling out of it. "At least they're not indestructable," he thought.

During this confrontation, his right flank had had its hands full encountering the lighter British tanks, and still more were coming. One of the IIs far foward radioed that all the trucks were destroyed and Matildas were arriving in force along with some strange new tanks. He ordered withdrawal.

Shells were hitting his heavy armor on a regular basis, with his gunner returning fire just as regularly. He took one last look over the battlefield. It was hard to tell the live tanks from those which had been knocked out. He ordered his driver to reverse. The loud chattering noise that followed spelled track damage. The tank shook a little, but did not move. "Everybody out!" he yelled into the hatch. The worried looks on his crew's faces said plenty.

They managed to hop on a passing II that had survived. As they escaped, Stryker wished that he could have had time to hook up and tow his tank. IIIj's were hard to come by. And what was that funny looking tank?

**UNITS-** The arrival of the American Grant medium tanks in early 1942, helped the British even the score on quality. Having the same gun as the Stuart in the turret, it also sported a second, 75mm gun in a sponson on the hull. The increase in firepower proved a fair match for the earlier Panzer III and IV, although it was still outclassed by the IIIj. German tank crews were very surprised when they first encountered the Grants. Aside from its second gun, its heavier armor was also somewhat disconcerting.

A popular British tank was the Stuart, which was, like the Grant, acquired from the Americans through lend-lease. It was also known as a Honey. It earned this nickname due to its reliability over the Crusader and Valentine tanks which the British crews had put up with since the war had begun. These tanks were breakdown-prone; the bulk of an attack force often suffering thrown tracks and engine troubles before they even encountered the enemy. Crusaders, especially, were highly flammable when hit. This gave rise to the term "brew up" meaning more than heating water for tea. But due to the loss of a large amount of equipment when France was overrun, England had no room for research and development of new models or armor. Instead, they concentrated on catching up rather than getting ahead.

If you deny the British their Stuarts and Grants, what remains is a rather feeble fighting force. Even though the Matildas can close on a position while their crews light cigarettes from the sparks caused by so many shells bouncing off them, the law of averages finally catches up with them (with their slow movement, it has time) and a hit becomes a kill. Offensively, when they do get a shot off, it is not likely to hit anything beyond ten hexes. And when it does, it will not prompt German players into fits of nervousness. Its low attack factor necessitates flank shots, and flank shots, one of the keys of victory, are a function of mobility.

Crusaders, while filling out the British order of battle, often accommodate German target practice. They sometimes can appear threatening enough to draw fire from more likely targets. They also represent some of the lesser tanks that were not included in the counter mix. Under the factorization used, the A-13 Cruiser would

be much like a Crusader, only worse. Along these same lines, the Grant fills in nicely for the Valentine, if you'll pardon the attack factor.

The British had no respectable anti-tank gun in the earlier years, and relied almost entirely on the unimpressive two-pounder. When available, the Bofors anti-aircraft gun served a secondary role as an anti-tank gun. The prime advantage of this Swedish-made weapon was its high rate of fire.

## ROMMEL'S

Although it did have some problems with sights, once it was on target, it could cause considerable damage, with 120 rounds automatically fired per minute. Its rate of fire could be increased, but, for playability, it was kept in line with other AT guns. Finally, in late 1941, the six-pounder was introduced. This was a very good anti-tank weapon that brought the British more in line with the German weaponry.

If you remove the IIIj's and 88s from the German order of battle, you will still have a decent fighting force. The German equipment was not always top-of-the-line stuff, but it held its own against the British. The German General Staff at times referred to the campaign as "The African Sideshow" and reserved the better equipment for the Russian campaign. Although the IV "F" models are not in the game (weighing in at 30-23-7, they would be reminiscent of OGRE) the IIIj is good enough. They were primarily a stopgap measure, designed to temporarily counter the phenomenal T34 which the Wehrmacht was encountering on the Russian Front. A longer 50mm gun was added to the standard III, and 20mm of face hardened armor was welded to its front.

The Panzerkampfwagen (armored battle vehicle) III and IV were the standard tanks of the German army. In the Battle of France, 1940, the early models of the Pz III, armed with a short 37mm gun, were the main anti-tank armor. The Pz IV, with a short 75mm howitzer, was intended for infantry support only and carried high explosive shells rather than solid, armor piercing shot. As the war went on, the III was gradually up-gunned and up armored until it was phased out in 1943. The IV became the main battle tank of the German army, in the later years. It too was up-gunned and armor was increased



to keep pace with the armor of the day. Just for comparison, the late 1942 IVh would factor in at roughly 30-30-7, which, in the game, would be rather impressive.

Muzzle velocity was what made the long 37mm (long in comparison of projectile diameter to barrel length) comparable to the 75mm howitzer of the IVd. In attempts to achieve even greater velocities, the idea arose of squeezing the shot as it travelled the length of the barrel. The

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first standard field weapon to use this method was the German 28/20 squeeze-bore anti-tank gun. The 28mm shot was compressed eight millimeters along the length of the barrel and "popped" out of the end at an amazing 4550 feet-per-second. This, coupled with a special tungsten carbide core projectile, gave it high penetrating characteristics for its size. Although it could conceivably have a higher attack factor in the game, it was toned down to account for accuracy problems and a small crew.

The Pak 38, Germany's 50mm anti-tank gun, became standard weaponry in the German army. It was basically the same gun found in the IIIj. Although highly accurate, it did have some trouble penetrating heavier armor. This was dealt with by using APCR (Armor Piercing Composite Ribid) shot. This was a shell that had a solid core surrounded by a lightweight sheath. It achieved greater velocity (3930 feet-per-second) due to its lower weight to surface area. It was in limited quantities in Africa and not used in the game. Those who wish to include it should increase all 50mm gun attack factors by five.

The weapon that had no trouble dealing with heavier armor was the 88. The one presented in the game is the Flak 36, an anti-aircraft gun that repeatedly proved its worth in an anti-tank role. No anti-tank weapon of the war compared to the 88. Its attack factor reflects its capabilities.

The Italian armor, mainly the M 13/40, was not included in the game. The Italian armored division, the Ariete, was involved in sorties beyond the scope of the game.

**TACTICS-** When it came to using anti-tank weapons, the Germans were writing the book. One tactic which Rommel applied

was breaching the enemy line with a concentrated armor force. Once a hole was punched, a smaller force was sent to the enemy's rear areas while anti-tank guns move into positions just behind the enemy's shattered line. When the small armored force encountered the enemy's armored reserves, they would turn about and high tail it back to their own lines (Run away! Run away!). This would tempt the British armor into pursuit, and they would follow the German armor right into the anti-tank guns. The British fell for this more than once.

There was a common notion that armor in the desert was much like ships on the sea, and similar tactics would apply. Rommel gave up on this idea early, opting for a combined arms force that was mobile, and sending anti-tank guns right into an attack along with tanks. Rommel trained his anti-tank gun crews to maintain high mobility. They were often provided with halftracks. This took the anti-tank gun out of its purely defensive role. On the attack, they could lay down a nasty base of fire while the tanks moved in. Thus, the game gives German anti-tank guns a little extra mobility and allows Pz IIs to tow them, in lieu of halftracks, in some of the scenarios.

**GAME MECHANICS-** In the course of design, the turn sequence underwent the most revisions. Many systems were tried, from complex simultaneous move-fire game-turns reminiscent of miniatures rules, to a simple move-fire player turn. This is one area where players can experiment. An interesting and more realistic turn sequence would be including opportunity fire in the first movement phase. Players could use their defensive fire at any point during the other player's first movement. A plus-one-modifier on the "to hit" die roll should be included. Units which exercise opportunity fire would not be permitted to fire in the defensive fire phase of that turn. This slight complication would prevent the more mobile tanks from darting from cover to cover.

As it stands, the turn sequence provides a simple system for representing armor "mixing it up".

Facing is probably the most important tactical tool of the game. Flanking becomes important, as well it should be, in a tactical-level game. Although the Matilda is heavily armored all around, the IIIj, once flanked, becomes a reasonable target for any British tank. The sparse cover of the desert had tank commanders of both sides developing strong aversion to exposing their vehicles' flanks.

The total combat system, which involves attempting to hit a target before determining damage, can prove frustrating at times; especially when all your tanks fire and don't hit anything! The game represents combat that occurred in extreme conditions. The sun was bright and hot. Dust prevailed, obscuring vision. Many doubt whether a tank could hit anything over a few hundred meters away when the desert sun was high.

In the game, the only sure hits are the dangerous moves to hexes adjacent to the target. With an increasing possibility of hits and penetration as range decreases, even the lesser tanks gain some prominence. A lowly Panzer II can slip through the lines and pop up behind a ridge, perhaps getting 2-1 odds on a Stuart.

The little events, when added together, become critical. Imagine your offensive on Sidi Rezegh going very well when you hit some mines and lose two IIIs. And that anti-tank gun which should have been in a building, is behind a ridge to your right, experimenting with penetration of the flank armor of a Panzer IV. Meanwhile, a 25-pounder barrage is beginning to land all about your 88, which still hasn't knocked out that Matilda you already bypassed.

Since all on-board combat is direct fire, line-of-sight is necessary. When line-of-sight passes through a ridge hex-side with a target directly behind it, we have a classic example of a target being "hull down". This simply means that the hull has substantial protection from direct firing weapons. Since the turret is all that is visible, the plus two die roll modifier represents such shots at the smaller target. Desert ridges were the only common terrain feature of the desert, therefore, it became standard tactical doctrine for both sides to get hull-down whenever possible.

Die roll modifiers represent weapon accuracy and difficulty hitting a target, due to its size, or due to firing from a shaking turret of a tank on the move. As for target size, anti-tank guns were small, compared to tanks; and, when dug in, had little more than a gun barrel exposed. Generally, the anti-tank guns were more accurate than their turretted counterparts, whose crew had to cope with limited vision and cramped space. Anti-tank guns also had a higher rate of fire because their crew was not limited by turret capacity. The average turret was three-man, with a gunner, loader, and commander. The 88 had an eleven man crew, but for playability, its rate of fire is limited in the game.

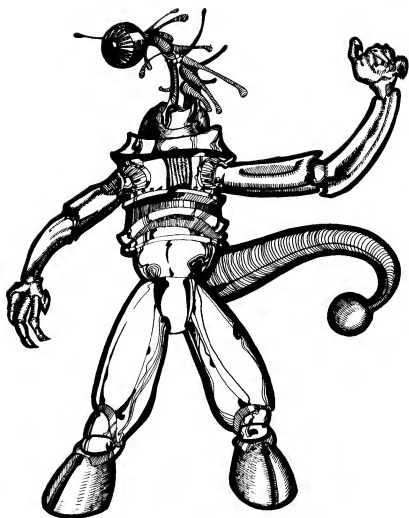
In most cases, units represent their historical counterparts to enough of a degree that standard tactical doctrines may be applied. Concentration of firepower, piecemeal attacks, flanking moves and other such tactics work.

For those interested in earlier and later phases of the campaign, I am including factorization for units not included in the counter-mix. For earlier periods, the A-13 would be 10-3-9, and the Italian M 13/40 would be 8-8-5. For the later periods; on the British side is the Sherman at 30-28-6, and the Churchill III at 30-30-5. The flank defense of the Churchill is 25, rather than 15. On the German side is the later IVf2 at 30-23-7, and the monstrous Tiger I at 40-40-5. With these later tanks used alone, only the Tiger has a die roll modifier attached. It is -1 on all to-hit rolls made.

Scenarios for earlier and later periods be rather tricky, as a variety in equipment is more extreme. A suggestion for an earlier scenario, set prior to the arrival of the German army, would be: British--three matildas and six A-13s. Italian--12 M 13/40. Use the open scenario rules for entry and terrain selection.

A later scenario could be six Shermans, six Grants and one Churchill versus two Tigers and six IVf2's. All ridges should be used, as these units appeared in Tunisia, where the desert gave way to more hills and terrain.

As a final line, ROMMEL'S PANZERS is a game, not a simulation. Throughout design, playability took precedence over realism. There are many games on the market wrought with realism and complexity. They are interesting, but they can tax one's memory and wear out dice. Large amounts of time must be devoted to them. I buy a lot of games, but lately, I have played only Micro's. They represent a level of fun and playability that has not been explored since the days of Battle of the Bulge and Afrika Korps. Thus, in this age of rising complexity, I have chosen to take part in a trend towards simplicity.





# the Lords of UNDEREARTH<sup>TM</sup>

## THE LORDS OF UNDEREARTH

A Letter From  
Designer Keith Gross

Enclosed is a list of corrections to THE LORDS OF UNDEREARTH. Please send a copy to people who write to Metagaming about rules questions, and keep it in your files for when you are ready to do a second printing, so that corrections can be made.

Some of the mistakes are because I didn't adequately proofread my final draft, and others were because I left inadequate instructions for the graphics, (not saying what was important for play). Sorry.

None of the errors are so serious that an insert into the existing copies is required; they will merely cause a little confusion for most gamers. I think that gamers will still have fun with THE LORDS OF UNDEREARTH; I am pleased with the way it came out. As I said in my last letter, the box, map and counters are excellent. Give my congratulations to Trace Hallowell.

## Errata for THE LORDS OF UNDEREARTH

1. On the sample unit on page 3, the labels for "Movement Allowance" and "Combat Factor" are switched. (This was probably obvious from the examples and/or common sense.)

2. Companies and Individuals counters are not clearly distinguished. Note that the Dwarf Dependents and the Goblins are Companies, and that Companies generally have much larger Combat Factors than Individuals.

3. "North" is towards map section A. The East Gate is the door from the white (Outside) hexes on the right side of section A. East Hall is the large room with a pit, next to East Gate. The Great Hall is the large room in the center. West Gate is the door going to the Outside hexes in the southwest corner.

4. The Set-up rules for "Pursuit" (scenario 20.1) should say that a Captain of the Dwarves' Garrison is placed on the "Lord" (abbreviated "L") hex of the Throne Room.

5. In the "Underearth Dwellers" section of scenario 20.5 ("Gold!"), the following list should be inserted in rule no. 2, after, "All Underearth Dwellers except the Dragon": (1 35-8 Goblin Company, 2 Trolls, 1 Wolf, 1 Bear, 1 Gargoyle, and 1 Giant Scorpion).

6. The rules for "Gold!" should state explicitly that players may attack each other, as well as the Underearth Dwellers.



## CONVENTIONS:

**DALCON II:** June 5-7; Gordon Griffith, Richland College, 12800 Abrams, Dallas, Texas 75243; \$150 TFT Tournament, Stellar Conquest; Metagaming attends.

**STRATACON II:** June 19-21; Ancient, Medieval, Napoleonic, Naval and Fantasy Games; Pre-register by mail before May 29; Robson Square Media Center, 800 Robson St., Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

**GAMECON I:** June 26-28; Miniatures, Role-Playing, Video and Board Games; \$6 after May 1 or \$3 per day; Chemeketa Community College; Game Alliance of Salem, 481 Ferry St., Salem, Oregon, 97301.

**PACIFIC ORIGINS:** July 3-5; Michelle X. Deale-Duffield; PO Box 5548, San Jose, CA 95150; \$1,000 TFT Tournament, Metagaming attends.

**ODYSSEY '81:** July 7-9; INH Simulations Game Club, Memorial Union Building, University of New Hampshire, Durham, N.H., 03824.

**MINNESOTA CAMPAIGN FIVE:** July 11, 12; Prof. M.A.R. Barker, Dave Arneson; Pre-register before June 30 for \$5, otherwise \$8 at the door or \$5 per day; The Earle Brown Continuing Education Center, U. of M., St. Paul; Mr. Jeff Berry, 343 E. 19th St., Apt. 4B, Minneapolis, MN, 55406.

**CWA-CON '81:** July 16-19; Adventure, Miniatures Role-Playing, War and Board Games - Auctions; Pre-register for \$9, otherwise \$12 at the door or \$6 per day; at the Northlake Hotel, 401 W. Lake St., Northlake, IL, 60164; write to CWA-CON '81, Box 10397, Ft. Dearborn Station, Chicago, IL 60610.

**GEN CON EAST:** July 23-26; P.O. Box 139, Middletown, NJ 07748; \$1,000 TFT Tournament, Stellar Conquest, Command at Sea, Micro tourney, Metagaming attends.

**NAN CON:** July 31 - Aug. 2; Stephen C. Nanny; Nan's Toys and Games; 1385 Galleria Mall, 5015 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77056; TFT, Metagaming attends.

**GEN CON XIV:** Aug. 13-16; PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147; Unicorn Gold tournament, Metagaming attends.

**DENVENTION II:** Sept. 3-7; Bill Reece, PO Box 11547, Denver, CO 80211; Science Fiction, Metagaming attends.

**GLASC VI:** September 4-7; Pre-register for \$6, \$8 at the door; At the Student Union, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA; GLASC VI, c/o L. Daniel, 20550 Wyandotte St., Canoga Park, CA 91306.

**Dragon Flight:** September 12-14, FRP and War Games; Seattle University; The Brass Dragon Society, Box 33872, Seattle, WA, 98133; (206) 364-8383.

**ARMADILLO CON III:** October; In Austin, TX; Science Fiction, games; Metagaming Gox 15346, Austin, TX 78761; \$100 TFT tournament, Stellar Conquest, Micros, Metagaming attends.

## MISC:

**VIKING!:** For those who want to contribute to sustaining continued acquisition of data from the surviving Viking Lander; Viking Fund, 357 Saratoga Ave., Santa Clara, CA, 95050.

**DRAGONS:** While they last, send S.A.S.E. for a free glossy print of the Silver Dragon from Metagaming's 1980 treasure hunt. Also ask for news about the next hunt: The Treasure of Unicorn Gold. Metagaming, Box 15346, Austin, TX 78761.



# METAGAMES

## *COMMAND AT SEA*

**LEVEL:** Very advanced play for 2 or more aged 18 and up.

**PLAYABILITY:** Complex learning, rapid play system. 3-8 hours playtime.

**COMPONENTS:** 24 ship counters, rules, 20 ship data charts, 20 ship command plots, 4 turn gauges, damage tables and spinner.

**COMMAND AT SEA** is a scale simulation of naval battles. Units are single ships. Each ship is defined by its guns, compartments and combat factors. You play by acting as commander of a ship or task group with a mission. You plot the moves, you fire the guns, you assess the damage. And, it is all to actual 1/4800 scale.

## *THE AIR EATERS STRIKE BACK*

**LEVEL:** Advanced competition for two, age 14 and up.

**PLAYABILITY:** Moderate complexity. Playtime 3 to 6 hours.

**COMPONENTS:** 17 x 22 map, 360 play counters, rules and data sheets.

**THE AIR EATERS STRIKE BACK** is a strategic simulation of the alien invasion of the inner solar system in the 21st century. Turns are three months, planets move in orbit and spaceships move from planet to planet. Separate ground actions occur on maps of Mercury, Earth, Mars, the Venusian poles, Ganymede, Callisto, Europa and Io -- all in the same scale. Counters represent Motherships, Novaships, Escorts, fighters, Quasarships, corvettes, transports and FTL units. A variety of ground units are also provided. Rules cover production, technology, teleportation, combat and movement.

## *HITLER'S WAR*

**LEVEL:** Advanced competition for 2 or 3 players age 15 and up.

**PLAYABILITY:** Moderate complexity. Scenarios from 1 to 5 hours play.

**COMPONENTS:** 360 play counters, 17 x 22 map, record sheets and rules.

**HITLER'S WAR** is a grand-strategic level game of theatre operations in World War II. Turns represent four months and the map represents the European, Mediterranean, Baltic and Russian theatres. Units are the armies, army groups, fleets and airforces. Unit types include Infantry, Mechanized, Amphibious, Paratroop, Submarine, ASW, Bomber, Fighter, Air Defense, Missile and Atomic Bomb. Rules cover morale, production, technology, continued advance, winter, supply, sea movement, forts, lend lease and neutral countries.

## *TROJAN WAR*

**LEVEL:** Average complexity for two players age 12 and up.

**PLAYABILITY:** Scenarios play in 1½ to 4 hours of rapid action.

**COMPONENTS:** 240 play counters, 17 x 22 map and rules booklet.

**TROJAN WAR** is true to its source, the Iliad. The map represents the area described by Homer. The play counters represent 56 Greek and 51 Trojan named heroes of three classes, plus chariots and status markers. Rules cover combat with bow and spear, chariots, rendering aid, rallying and intervention of the gods. There are eleven scenarios covering different stages of siege plus a campaign game of the entire eleven years.

 **Metagaming**

Box 15346  
Austin, TX 78761

Coming soon from . . .

# letters...

If you find it worth your while, please explain the runes on the bottom of p.3 of THE LORDS OF UNDEREARTH (Microgame 18) and the runes on the bottom tab of the box containing that same game as I am quite interested in such matters. Please include a translation.

I have worked on the translation of these runes for some time, and I believe that I understand the message (if any) they imply. Assuming I am correct in my translations, does Denis Loubet (illustrations/graphics designer for THE LORDS OF UNDEREARTH) have any knowledge of or connection with a possible TFT character/place by the title of "Orfik"? (It is highly probable, of course, that I am incorrect in my assumptions, but I thought the matter worth your attentions.)

I am 17 years old, and have been an avid player of Metagaming games (especially The Fantasy Trip) since about 2 years ago. Your game systems are not to be compared with any other; providing simple, easy to understand rules, and fascinating game scenarios. Metagaming's wargaming system is obviously superior to most (if not all) others.

Too, our TFT organization would like to thank you folks at Metagaming for saving us from the unbelievably complicated and boring clutches of "Dungeons and Dragons". We are forever in your debt.

Keep 'em coming!

Jefferson Kindrick  
Cayce, S.C.

P.S.

To settle a argument between me and a couple of friends, can Iron flesh-Stone belts be worn over or with armor of any kind? (This is in relation to TFT WIZARD)

First, thanks for your kind words.

Denis is the man that did the great artwork for the cover and counters of THE LORDS OF UNDEREARTH. . . but I'm responsible for the design.

I can't comment on the runes at this time, but we will be happy to publish any guesses or translations in INTERPLAY.

Ron says Iron flesh-stone belts may be worn along with armor.

T.H.

As I was going through my new copy of LORDS OF THE UNDEREARTH this morning, I noticed on page 3 of the rule book-"\* N - IY - ARPIK". Later, after examining the counters and the box I found on the "Treasure" counter-"ARPIK IY HLYAT" and on the bottom tab of the box-"ARPIK IY XRAYIY". Do these mean anything- clues to aother "SILVER DRAGON"?

After remembering about the "cirth" translation in the appendix E of Return of the King by J.R.R. Tolkien, I sought to translate the runes. The translation came to be-

on rule book-"Nga Iy Dhbgich"  
on box-"Dhbgichy Zbshgiky"  
on "Treasure" counter-"Dhbgich Psng(z)  
Achknj(z)nr".

I noticed that the word "Dhbgich" came up often. These may not have been translated through "cirth" but, I tried to see what I could get. Could you please clear this up for me?

Joe Campana  
Riverside,CA

P.S. I like playing THE LORDS OF UNDEREARTH. It's great!

Keep trying.

T.H.

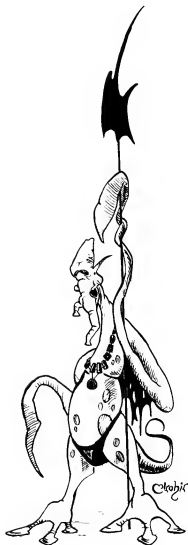
I have a suggestion.

I have been playing your microgame BLACK HOLE for some time now, and the defense factor of '1' on everything but missiles has been rather annoying. You would think vehicles capable of firing such lasers and missiles would be able to withstand them. Any attack by a HEV or TMU results in instant destruction. I suggest that each player take about 1/4 of his counters, and designate it either a 'missile-resistant' or 'laser-resistant' vehicle. Most laser-firing vehicles would be 'laser-resistant', and vice versa. 'laser-resistant' units would be destroyed by any hit from a missile, but a laser firing PSV would have a defense strength against lasers of 2, a laser firing MPV 3, and an HEV 4 points. The opposite would be true for missile-firing units, which would be destroyed by any laser hit. If you wish to pass this suggestion on or print it in



INTERPLAY, you may. I have playtested it and found it completely balanced. Players should note with a pencilled L or M on the back of their counters which units are Laser or Missile resistant.

Tim Armstrong



Dear Editor,

Boy, am I hacked at Metagaming! You got the gall to distribute Some Turkey's games. Did you idiots know that he's a Liar, at least? In A FISTFULL OF TURKEYS Some claims that he invented wargaming and the idea of the hexagon for maps. That's simply horse apples. I know because I invented wargaming and the hexagon.

I created hexagons when I was six years old. In the first grade I tried to draw circles for movement on my first solitaire, simultaneous hidden-movement game. But, being young, I couldn't draw the circles right. They all came out with flat sides, six flat sides to be exact. I noticed they fit together evenly to cover a map and that was that, the hexagon grid map was born.

I dare you to print my letter and let the truth be known!

Red (John Gault) Darnigame

(Ed. Before printing this letter we felt it only fair to let Mr. Turkey respond.)

Dear Editor,

That pipsqueak Darnigame wants to claim everything. To hear him tell it every genius idea in adventure gaming sprang whole cloth from his feeble brow. It's merely another attempt of the oppressor human race to deny the societal contributions of turkeydom. Red's only jealous of those who had the wisdom to steal my ideas before he knew how neat they were. He only stole ideas second hand from those who stole from me. He didn't even show good taste when he did steal them.

If your pathetic rag wants to publish such inane claims you can at least have the decency to publish my response. Darnigame is the liar, not I.

Some Turkey, Esq.

Dear Editor,

Am Not!

Red (John Gault) Darnigame

Dear Editor,

Are so!

Some Turkey, Esq.

I recently purchased your Microquset Security Station No. 5 for \$4.15.

I am not satisfied with the maze because I feel it is falsely advertised.

Some examples are: The front panel of the box pictures a character examining an alarm clock and behind them is a complex with gun turrets. The back panel of the box shows a character examining a gun turret.

There is no mention of gun turrets anywhere in the maze with these pictures as a guide. I thought there would be a possibility of finding artifacts like guns; but the only guns are rifles, not turret guns. The rifles are badly corroded, just how badly corroded is anyone's guess. The only artifact is a recorder.

The gun turret pictures are misleading.

On page 29 is a picture of a water fountain with tentacles coming out of it.

On page 41 is picture of a character climbing around in what looks like an air duct.

There is no mention of any water fountain, let alone one with tentacles. Also, no where in the game do you have the option of climbing through air ducts.

The back panel of the box says in the description, "Great secrets and immense wealth await the brave invader of this strange place."

I found no "Great secrets" or "immense wealth" in any part of the maze. One sword was the only piece of treasure worth much.

Some of the markers were new and good, but some were reprints.

A friend and I went into this maze expecting to find what the description on the box had in it. I lost a character (my one and only) with 54 attribute points. My friend lost one that was even better with no problem.

I would like a retribution of 1. Your company to rule these characters alive. We would do this ourselves, but we don't cheat even though the maze is grossly unfair. Or 2. My money back for the game.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Scott Cramer  
Fostoria, OH

a nice set of art that gives the feel of fantasy adventure in a technological ruin. Of course, if you really had your heart set on finding the tentacle creature in a water fountain I can see you'd be a bit miffed.

If you want to create monsters and/or artifacts that art represented but weren't included in the game they would probably be publishable in INTERPLAY.

By the way, you did gain something of 'immense wealth' and 'great secret'. You gained the wisdom of knowing that no one is immortal. You learned that everyone, no matter how powerful, should always exercise caution and planning. Those are two 'secrets' of 'immense wealth' that many go through life and never learn. That's what I call a real bargain.

H. T.



Art for a game is sometimes prepared with the artist not having access to the game manuscript. This was the case with SECURITY STATION in which the artist only got a verbal description of the adventure. Given that he prepared, I think,

# Go for the gobble!



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